



Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

How to Handle Chemotherapy Safely at Home

There is no research that shows people taking care of those getting chemotherapy can be harmed. However, there is research that shows what happens to health care workers who often handle these medicines. So we think it is a good idea to tell you how to keep yourself safe. If you have any questions, talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

Protect yourself from chemotherapy medicine and body fluids

Chemotherapy medicines may be passed into body fluids such as vomit, urine, and stool. Handle these medicines and body fluids carefully while the patient gets them, and for two days after (48 hours). If your child throws up within 30 minutes after taking the medicine, call your doctor or nurse to find out whether to give more medicine.

From the time the patient gets the medicine, until two days after the last dose, you may choose to:

- Wear gloves when handling diapers, vomit basins, or any items containing urine, vomit, or stool.
- Take off gloves carefully, turn them inside out, put them in a plastic bag, tie it, and put the bag in the garbage. After you take off the gloves, always wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Put body fluids in the toilet, close the lid, then flush the toilet.



**Take off gloves carefully,
turn them inside out.**

- Put items that get thrown out, such as diapers, paper towels, or gloves, in a plastic bag, tie it, and put the bag in the garbage.
- Carry linens, towels, or cloth diapers containing chemotherapy or body fluids away from the body.
- Wash linens, towels, or cloth diapers containing chemotherapy or body fluids by themselves using regular laundry soap and hot water.
- Wash reusable items, such as basins or bedpans, well with soap and water after each use.
- If using syringes and needles to give chemotherapy, put the used ones in a needle box or an empty hard plastic container, such as a detergent jug, and bring the container to the clinic or hospital on your next visit.

How to give chemotherapy

Chemotherapy can be given by mouth, put on the skin, or given through injection into the skin, muscle, or vein. Keep these medicines away from pets and children. Keep them in a clean dry place, or where your nurse tells you to store them. It is best not to handle chemotherapy if you are pregnant, but if you must do so, wear gloves and a mask.

What to wear

- Gloves
 - If you use disposable gloves, take them off carefully, turn them inside out, put them in a plastic bag, tie it, and put the bag in the garbage.
 - If you use household rubber gloves, leave them on and wash them with soap and water for 20 seconds. Then take off the gloves, and wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- If you are crushing pills or opening capsules, wear a mask and eye protection

Get ready

- Find a clean, dry place away from food, the kitchen, pets, fans, or open windows.
- You may cover your work area with
 - a paper towel
 - a plastic cloth, bag, or wrap that can be thrown away
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after handling chemotherapy medicines.
- Have one set of supplies that you only use for chemotherapy, such as spoons, pill crusher, or cups.

- If you use a syringe or pen device, look at it before you use it. Notice if it has any cracks, holes, or breaks. Get a skin cleanser (alcohol or chlorhexidine), gauze pad, and Band-aid, if needed.

For chemotherapy given by mouth

How to open capsules

- Opening a capsule can make a dust of medicine that you should not breathe in. Wear a mask and eye protection.
- Gently twist ends apart and put the medicine in a small amount of food or liquid, such as applesauce, Jell-O, pudding, or baby food.

How to crush pills

- If the patient cannot swallow pills, you may need to crush them. This can make a dust of medicine that you should not breathe in. Wear a mask and eye protection.
- Use a pill crusher that you will only be using with chemotherapy medicine.
- Or, you may put the dose in a small plastic bag that zips closed. Seal the bag and use a spoon to crush the pill through the plastic..
- Put the crushed medicine into a small amount of food or fluid, such as applesauce, Jell-O, pudding, frozen fruit juice concentrate, or baby food.

How to clean up

- Have one set of supplies that you only use for chemotherapy, such as spoons, pill crusher, or cups.
- Wash all supplies with soap and water after each use. Dry them well.
- To throw out any disposable supplies, put them in a plastic bag, tie it, and put the bag in the garbage.
- If using syringes and needles to give chemotherapy, put the used ones in a needle box or an empty hard plastic container, such as a detergent jug, and bring the container to the clinic or hospital on your next visit.

What to do if you are exposed to chemotherapy or body fluids

- **Skin:** Take off clothing that has chemotherapy on it. Wash the skin and surrounding area with soap and water for 5 to 15 minutes.
- **Eye:** Flush eye with water without stopping for 15 minutes.
- Call the Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222, 800-362-0101, or 602-253-3334

How to clean up a spill of chemotherapy medicine

1. Wear gloves.
2. Place paper towels or absorbent pad over the spill.
3. Carefully wipe up spill.
4. Wash area with soap and water, and dry.
5. Put the paper towels, pad, other things you used for clean-up, and gloves, in a plastic bag, tie it, and put it in the garbage.
6. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.

If you have a question about exposure to a chemotherapy medicine

- Call your doctor or clinic nurse right away at 602-546-0920.
- Call Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222, 800-362-0101, or 602-253-3334

Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor how you will keep yourself safe when your child is getting chemotherapy medicine. (Check when done.)
- Show your nurse or doctor how you would take off gloves. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor where you will store the medicine. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor what you would do if you spilled some chemotherapy medicine. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor who you would call if you had a question about chemotherapy safety. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

- call your child's doctor or
- call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-546-1400

866-933-6459

www.phoenixchildrens.com

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

Thursday, March 11, 2010 • DRAFT to family review
#1056 • Written by Jaimie Barker, RN



Name of Health Care Provider: _____ Number: 1056
For office use: Date returned: _____ db nb

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.
Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? Yes No

easy to read? Yes No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading this handout? Yes No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any questions about the subject? Yes No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

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Thank you for helping us!